

MANIZALES: OPEN DOORS TO OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING

Thanks to a program supported by the U.S. Government, 280 unemployed and unskilled young men and women from Manizales, Colombia, were able to find a job they didn't have before. These young people, from low-income homes, were trained as part of the Open Doors to Occupational Training.

To achieve this, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) rendered technical assistance to the Ministry of Communications and the Manizales Mayor's Office, to design and implement a training program on basic Information & Communications Technology (ICT) for vulnerable segments of the Manizales population. Participating companies included the International Computer Driving Licensing (ICDL), the National Training Center (SENA), Parquesoft, Cisco and Intel, to name a few.

In addition to supporting vulnerable groups, USAID's aim is to enhance the competitiveness of small and medium



Carlos Arturo Duque during a welding training.

businesses, and with the Manizales program, both objectives were acknowledged. After training in areas that include bartending, marketing and sales, welding and handling of industrial equipment, beneficiaries were hired to work full time with companies that are part of the alliance, and some even received support to start their own business.

One of the beneficiaries, Carlos Arturo Duque, is one of the most notorious cases of personal self-improvement (see left). In addition to training in welding, he dreams of becoming a tenor and earning a sufficient income through his music, which he learned on his own.

COMPREHENSIVE ASSISTANCE

Carlos Duque is a young man who started taking a welding class offered by the Open Doors to Occupational Training. Amidst the socialization process, it was found that the young man's natural vocation was classical music and opera. Taking advantage of his potential, the program provided him with the opportunity to display this talent through the Radio Citizen Online website, making him known to the world and seeking academic support for him to continue with his training.

At this moment he relies on the support of his family and the Open Doors to Occupational Training project.



Carlos Arturo Duque dreams of becoming a musician and has received support to make it come true.

Through this program, USAID seeks to professionalize young people, creating responsibility to take accountability for a skill and provide them with added value to their knowledge on Information & Communications Technology.

There are also several other cases of single mothers who are heads of households and have founded much needed support in this program to develop personally and professionally. Thanks to this training, they have been able to be part of the labor force and enjoy greater social inclusion and competitiveness.

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